(d) if so, the reasons for denying them the right to make use to their qualifications; and

(e) the steps Government propose in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) No Sir,

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Advocates Act-1961 does not bar Nuns to take degree in Law.

(d) Hon'ble High Court of Kerala in Fr. Thomas Pudussery *V.* Bar Council of Kerala [2005(4) KLT 745] has pronounced that Priests and Nuns are eligible to be enrolled as Advocates provided they are not in full time employment/engagement under the church or the institutions under it.

(e) Does not arise.

Inclusion of "Autism" under Disability Act

†316 . SHRI VASANT CHAVAN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the persons suffering from mental disorders such as "Autism" have not been included in the 'Persons with Disability' Act;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) if not, the relevant clauses of the Act in which this disease has been included alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) Persons with Autism are included in the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, under the category "Mental Retardation" which has been defined under Section 2(r). Benefits under the Act are available of disability for persons on the basis of certificate issued in terms of guidelines for assessment of disability for persons with mental retardation. In addition, the National Trust for Welfare of person with Autism, Cerebral, Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities has

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

been set up which also provide necessary support to the persons with Autism & their families, and protect their interest after the death of their parents through legal guardianship.

Development of sick SSIs

*318. SHRI RAJIV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of recent RBI report stating that increasing incidences of SSIs declaring themselves sick is a reason for slowing growth of flow of bank credit to the sector;

(b) whether Government are of the view that the trend may lead to drying up of a major source of financial assistance to the SSIs in the country; and

(c) whether any plans have been formulated or steps being taken to increase and promote the credit and loan sources for development of SSI sector in India?

THE MINISTER OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) According to information received from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), it has not brought out any report recently which mentions that incidence of Small Scale Industries (SSIs) declaring themselves sick is increasing or the credit flow to this sector from banks is slowing down. On the contrary, according to the information provided by the RBI, the number of sick SSIs has declined from 1,67,980 as at the end of March 2003 to 1,38,041 as the end of March 2005. During the same period, the loans from the public sector banks outstanding against the SSI has gone up from Rs. 52,988 crore to Rs. 67,634 crore.

(b) and (c) In view of the declining trend in sickness and increasing trend in flow of credit to the SSI as stated in reply to part (a) above, there is no question of the bank finance to the SSI drying up. On the contrary, the 'policy Package for Stepping up Credit to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)' as announced by the Central Government on 10th August, 2005 envisages a minimum of 20 per cent year-on-year growth in credit to the SME sector, leading to doubling of the loan outstanding in a period of 5 years. Based on this Policy Package, the RBI has already issued detailed guidelines to the public sector banks on 19th August, 2005.